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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002766

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/03/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#) [MINUSTAH](#)

SUBJECT: RENE PREVAL ASKS FOR HELP WITH DISARMAMENT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Timothy M. Carney for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. In a meeting on November 2, ex-President and current Presidential hopeful Rene Preval told Charge that several gang leaders in Cite Soleil are "tired, afraid and looking for a way out." According to Preval, up to six of these persons are prepared to pursue disarmament and demobilization in exchange for a way out of Cite Soleil. Preval speculated that this would not entail departing Haiti, but perhaps relocation to the interior. Preval relayed the same message to SRSG Valdes, and asked for guarantees that USAID and MINUSTAH would be prepared to fill the vacuum without violence. He seeks to end the current impasse which has trapped the general population between the ganglords and MINUSTAH, and he fears that any new operations by MINUSTAH will produce disastrous casualties in the close, crumbling neighborhood. Preval asked that pressure be put on the highest levels of the interim government to pursue this option. Additionally, Preval weighed in on the candidacy of Dumarsais Simeus, stating that his "great fear" is that a Simeus victory will lead to violence. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Charge met with Rene Preval, former President of Haiti and current Presidential front runner, to discuss disarmament at Preval's request on November 2. Charge began the meeting by congratulating Preval on his LESPWA (Hope Platform) party's fortuitous placement as number one on the ballot. Preval stated that this was the "hand of God."

13. (C) Preval then told Charge that he requested the meeting not to discuss the elections but to discuss disarmament in Cite Soleil. He said that several of the young gang leaders in the area wish to lay down their arms. He described a situation in which the general populace is trapped in the middle between equally distasteful aggressors, the ganglords on one side and MINUSTAH on the other. He added to this that there are those who profit from the chaos: narcotraffickers, criminals, and even some politicians. He said that the people of Cite Soleil associate violence with MINUSTAH as much as the ganglords, and he asked that MINUSTAH and the USG engage in Cite Soleil non-violently. Preval stated that while a successful electoral registration is ongoing, those leaders in Cite Soleil who support elections have been specifically threatened and fear for their safety.

14. (C) While the situation remains fairly calm in Cite Soleil, Preval stated that the weapons are still there and the violence could return at any point. He stated that several of the gang leaders were "tired, afraid, and looking for a way out." He said that armed men in Cite Soleil feared not only MINUSTAH but also legitimate and crooked elements of the HNP, as well as the incessant inter-gang turf wars. Charge asked Preval if he had told SRSG Valdes about this, and Preval said that he had on the morning of 2 November. However, he cautioned that MINUSTAH could not do much to effect a disarmament without being ridiculed as collaborators by an unsympathetic interim government, national police, and political class. He therefore asked that pressure be put on the highest levels of the interim government to instruct the police to pursue disarmament.

15. (C) Charge responded that this was an important problem and one worth exploring. He said that he would confer with Valdes and seek to advance the issue. He also assured Preval that the USG had resources in place to rapidly bring jobs and social programs online in Cite Soleil should conditions be right. Charge stated that the interim government should be doing whatever possible to ensure that the elections take place with as little violence as possible.

16. (C) Preval stated that at least five or six known gang leaders were looking for a truce, but they needed a way out. He compared them to dogs trapped in a room together, saying, "if a vicious dog is trapped in your house, you open a door." He acknowledged the practical impossibility of foisting such persons on a foreign country, but said it might be possible to simply relocate them to the provincial capitals. The Charge asked about who would fill the power vacuum left by

the flight of these leaders, and Preval responded that if MINUSTAH and USAID could move in quickly and non-violently, the gang violence would likely die down.

17. (C) On elections, Preval was pessimistic about meeting the February 7 target. He said, "I am very concerned, if the CEP cannot even resolve little problems. It is not hard to put out a candidate list."

18. (C) On Dumarsais Simeus, Preval echoed what has become a familiar sentiment among the Haitian political class, each of whom "fear" that violence will result if the President is "mal elu" (wrongfully elected). Preval said he thinks the Presidency should be set aside from the legislature in terms of importance. He noted that the country will survive if a few legislative races are contested, but a contested Presidential election will be disastrous. When the Charge asked him if the Constitution ought to be amended to reflect the important role of the diaspora, Preval concurred and went far beyond that, saying that the Constitution needed a complete rewrite as well. However, he refused to concede that Simeus was part of the diaspora, saying "he is not Haitian." He said that the fight over Simeus was wasting precious time, and it was his "great fear" that Simeus' candidacy would lead to violence.

19. (C) COMMENT. MINUSTAH is wary of engaging with gang leaders, as the political class has strongly criticized such engagement in the past. However, Preval carries a level of credibility that could advance disarmament while simultaneously yielding significant electoral reward for him. Cite Soleil leader Rene Monplaisir is now a vocal supporter of Preval, and he led over a thousand people in a pro-Preval demonstration on November 3. Preval clearly seeks to take credit for eliminating gang violence in the area.

110. (C) The galling irony of the political class' criticism of Simeus is that an overwhelming number of them are also dual nationals or at least hold foreign residence. Nevertheless, it is clear that the same group of Haitian leaders that united to create the interim government are equally united in opposition to Simeus' candidacy, regardless of what appears to be his growing popularity among average Haitians. END COMMENT.
CARNEY